

FruitFruit

There are five major fruit and berry crops grown in the Garden State: apples, blueberries, cranberries, peaches, and strawberries. During the 2002 growing season, cold spring weather and drought conditions during the summer months significantly reduced the apple and peach production. There was no weather damage to berry crops, despite the minor frost damage to blueberry blooms. Rainfall during the later part of September was too late to benefit the fruit crops.

Total production of the five fruit and berry crops during 2002 amounted to 185 million pounds, down 18 percent from the previous year's production of 226 million pounds. Fruit value of utilized production totaled \$93.5 million, a gain of \$9.5 million from the 2001 total of \$84 million. Value of utilized production was higher for blueberries, cranberries, and strawberries, while apples and peaches declined from the previous year.

During 2002, among all major fruit and berry producing states in the nation, New Jersey ranked second in blueberry production; fourth in both cranberry and peach production; and seventeenth in apple production. Ranking crops by value of production within the state resulted in blueberries rated first with \$46.8 million. Peaches ranked second with \$25.2 million, while cranberries ranked third with \$13.8 million. Apples and strawberries ranked fourth and fifth with \$5.64 million and \$2.08 million, respectively.

Early spring frost significantly damaged apple and peach blossoms. Only a few orchards located in high elevations were able to avoid frost damage. Apple and peach production was also adversely affected by unfavorable growing conditions. Some orchards abandoned their entire apple crop due to sizing problems.

Apple production was much lower than normal. Total apple production was 35 million pounds, 20 million pounds less than a year ago. Utilized production, at 32 million pounds, compared with 50 million pounds in 2001. Average price, at 17.6 cents

per pound, compared to 16.2 cents per pound last year. Gloucester county was the leading apple producing county at 15.5 million pounds, accounting for 44 percent of the state's total production. Cumberland county ranked second at 6 million pounds and Camden ranked third at 4 million pounds. Burlington and Atlantic were fourth and fifth with 2.2 and 1.5 million pounds, respectively.

Peach production for the 2002 crop totaled 62 million pounds, with 57 million pounds utilized. The 2002 value of New Jersey peach production totaled \$25.2 million, down 11 percent from 2001. Gloucester county was the leading peach growing county in the state with production of 26.7 million pounds or 43 percent of the state's total production. Cumberland and Camden counties ranked second and third with production of 15 and 7 million pounds, respectively.

Cranberry growers in New Jersey produced a total of 430,000 barrels in 2002, a decrease of 136,000 barrels from 2001. The value of production was \$13.8 million, up 45 percent from the \$9.52 million in 2001. The marketing order that had restricted the amount of cranberries each producer could sell was lifted this year, so there was no difference between total and utilized production. Burlington county was the major cranberry producing area in the Garden State.

The 2002 total blueberry production, a record high of 43 million pounds, was up 5 million pounds from 2001's production of 38 million pounds. Value of utilized production was \$46.8 million compared to 2001's value of \$36.7 million. Atlantic and Burlington counties were the leading blueberry producing areas. The season average price of \$1.11 per pound was up 12 percent from the 99 cents per pound in 2001.

There were 400 acres of strawberries harvested in 2002. Total strawberry production, at 16,000 hundredweight, was down 2,000 hundredweight from 2001. All production was utilized. The season average price was \$130 per hundredweight, up \$58 from 2001. The value of production was \$2.08 million, up 60 percent from the previous year.